REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the present amendment and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11 are pending. In the present amendment, Claims 1 and 8 are currently amended and new Claims 9-11 are added. Support for the present amendment can be found, for example, in the original specification at page 16, line 17 to page 17, line 9 and in original Figures 1-6 and 9-12. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ogasawara et al. (JP 2003-144990, hereinafter "Ogasawara").

Applicants would like to thank Supervisory Patent Examiner Kornakov and Examiner Weddle for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative during the interview held on August 25, 2009. During the interview, the discussion focused on the sequentially shifted turning paths of adjacent coating areas of the present application and how these turning paths are different from those of the cited reference (Ogasawara). Accordingly, the present amendment is hereby submitted for formal consideration.

Turning now to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection and traverse this rejection, as discussed below.

The coating method recited in Claim 1 is hereby amended to clarify that the adjacent coating areas, which are adjacent in the conveying direction, abut along a boundary between the adjacent coating areas. Thus, the adjacent coating areas do not have space therebetween. Further, as discussed during the interview, Claim 1 recites that the coating is performed while forming a coating trajectory of said turning paths like a series of steps such that each successive one of the turning paths of each respective one of the adjacent coating areas on the boundary extends further in a direction opposite to the conveying direction than each previous one of the turning paths of the respective one of the adjacent coating areas. Thus, as

can be seen in the exemplary embodiment shown in Figure 2, at the boundary between coating area CAb and CAc, the turning paths for each respective coating area form a series of steps such that each successive one of the turning paths extends further in a direction opposite to the conveying direction than each previous one of the turning paths. It is respectfully submitted that the cited reference does not disclose or suggest every feature recited in amended Claim 1.

Ogasawara describes a method for coating a surface of a vehicle body by dividing the surface of the object to form a plurality of areas for coating, where each area is coated by at least one coater that reciprocates.[1] The Office Action, in section 6 on pages 3 and 4, notes that Ogasawara is silent as to changes in the positions of the terminal ends of the parallel transit paths. However, the Office Action takes the position that "it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention that in practicing JP '990, successive turning paths would be expected to shift towards the back, whether on the front side of the boundary or the rear side of the boundary, ... and that terminal ends and start ends would shift from the front side to rear side."

However, it is respectfully submitted that Ogasawara does not disclose or suggest "during the performing the coating of at least two of the adjacent coating areas in the conveying direction, when said sprayer units are reciprocating substantially parallel to said conveying direction of said object, positions of turning paths for reciprocation, located at a boundary between the adjacent coating areas such that the adjacent coating areas abut along the boundary, are sequentially shifted from a front side to a rear side in said conveying direction of said object, and the coating is performed while forming a coating trajectory of said turning paths like a series of steps such that each successive one of the turning paths of each respective one of the adjacent coating areas on the boundary extends further in a

[1] See Ogasawara, at paragraphs [0018]-[0024] and in Figures 1-9. It is noted that the citations to Ogasawara herein refer to an English language machine translation thereof.

direction opposite to the conveying direction than each previous one of the turning paths of the respective one of the adjacent coating areas," as recited in amended Claim 1.

Instead, as conceded in the last paragraph on page 3 of the Office Action, Ogasawara is silent with regards to turning paths of coating areas that are adjacent along the conveying direction. However, Ogasawara does show in Figures 2-6 how turning paths of adjacent coating areas (3L and 3R) in the direction which is perpendicular to the conveying direction are positioned. As can be seen clearly in Figures 3-5, the turning paths each appear to extend to a same distance along the boundary therebetween. Thus, the turning paths do not form the claimed series of steps.

Additionally, regarding the position that the claimed series of steps would be obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art, Applicants respectfully traverse this position. As discussed during the interview, the coating areas of Ogasawara would not inherently form the series of steps because Ogasawara does not disclose or suggest forming coatings paths that extend across a maximum coating width of the coaters while continuously conveying the object to be coated in the coating direction. On the contrary, as discussed above, the turning paths along the only boundary described in Ogasawara each appear to extend to a same distance, and thus could not be formed if the above conditions were required.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Ogasawara does not disclose or suggest every feature recited in amended Claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 1, and all claims dependent thereon, as unpatentable over Ogasawara be withdrawn.

Independent Claim 8, while directed to an alternative embodiment, recites features similar to those discussed above with regard to Claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 8 as unpatentable over Ogasawara also be withdrawn.

New Claims 9-11 are added by the present amendment. Support for new Claims 9-11 can be found, for example, in Figures 1-6 and their corresponding description at page 16, line

17 to page 28, line 9, and also in Figures 9-12 and their corresponding description. As can be seen, for example, in Figure 2 of the present application, the turning paths for each of the coating areas ***do not cross*** a boundary between the adjacent coating areas. On the contrary, as can be seen in each of Figures 2-6, the turning paths between adjacent coating areas ***do cross*** the boundaries therebetween. In fact, Ogasawara describes that these U-shaped clinch portions which form the turning paths allow a uniform coating film thickness.[2] Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 9-11 further patentably define over Ogasawara.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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[2] See Ogasawara, at paragraphs [0023] and [0024].